

Evils of the Reservation System

Frank Wood in
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FOR MORE than twenty years the people of the United States have sought to find the solution of the Indian problem in education, and large sums have been appropriated and used for this purpose. Let us consider some of the figures. There are not more than 250,000 Indians in the United States. For them the government holds in trust funds amounting to about \$24,000,000. They own about 116,000,000 acres of land, that is held for them by the government, which would give about 460 acres and \$100 in money to every man, woman, and child. After giving 100 acres of land to each Indian, there would still remain 66,000,000 acres which could be sold for their benefit and thrown open to white settlement. If the Indians had their own, and were free from government care, they would be the richest people on the face of the globe. Out of the 250,000 total, 180,000 Indians are now self-supporting.

During the last thirty years \$240,000,000 has been spent on an Indian population not exceeding 180,000. The appropriations of the United States government for Indians in 1901 were \$9,040,475.89, and more than \$3,000,000 was used for education. In 1877 only \$20,000 was appropriated for Indian schools. There has been a large and constant increase to the present time, until in the last twenty years \$45,000,000 has been spent by the government for the education of not over 20,000 Indian pupils. In addition, a very large amount has been spent by the mission schools of the various Christian denominations. There were, in 1901, 2,238 Indian school employees. The education of each pupil cost the government more than \$180. Have we commensurate results? Is not the solution of the Indian problem apparently still far away? Why?

The government's Indian work has been done through the agency of a complicated, cumbersome machine called the reservation or agency system, apparently constructed without an intelligent purpose, or, if it had a purpose, it was to prevent instead of accomplishing results. It has constantly been the enemy of progress, but its abolition could never be secured because an army of officeholders and politicians worked for its retention, as it provided some 3,000 offices, handled many millions of dollars annually and offered unusual chances to make money by the unscrupulous—all potent arguments with politicians for its continuance. There are some sixty reservations, forty-nine of them in charge of agents; the others are in charge of school superintendents.

It is generally supposed that the control of Indian affairs is vested in the Indian commissioner. It should be so, but is not. Indian affairs are under the divided jurisdiction of the Interior department, the War department and the Indian bureau. There is an Indian division in the Interior department through which the secretary of the Interior may take up and determine the most important matters, without the consent or even knowledge of the commissioner of Indian affairs. The commissioner has nothing to do with the appointment of

agents and inspectors except as he carries out the orders of the secretary of the Interior. The Indian bureau is only one of the many departments supervised by the Interior department. Indian affairs should be administered by one head—the commissioner. He should have such power and such help as are demanded for the proper discharge of his duties, and be held to the most rigid accountability, not only for his own action, but, so far as he can control, for the action of all his subordinates. There should be no divided responsibility and no difficulty in locating blame for maladministration. The agent is the most important official. He has absolute authority, not only over the Indians, but also over the school employees and the missionaries. His power has grown to the overthrow of all self-government, and he is often an irresponsible despot, with no laws to execute but rules and orders from the department at Washington.

The agent is rarely selected on account of his fitness for the place he is given, or for his interest in the civilization, education, or Christianization of the Indians. The exigencies of politics, not the needs of the Indians, dictate the appointment of agents. The local politicians of the states and territories nearest the Indian reservations demand, and are generally allowed, the right to nominate the Indian agents, and they are too often selected from second and third rate politicians to pay political debts. Such officials teach inefficiency and immorality. The reservation line is a wall which fences out law, civil institutions, social order, and trade and commerce except through the Indian trader, and fences in savagery, despotism, greed and lawlessness. The Indian under the reservation system is a helpless and pauperized dependent, over whom the agent has even the power of life and death, with no restraints upon him except such as fear may exert. He has immense opportunities to demoralize those under his power and to enrich himself at their expense, and doing so is often largely his business. He knows that if his wards outgrow the necessity of a guardian, his occupation is gone.

Laws for the punishment of certain crimes have in recent years been extended over the reservation, but they have been practically nullified on account of the absence of all machinery of law. There are no courts, prosecuting attorneys, or judges, except the Indian judges, who are generally creatures of the agent, and appointed by him from those subservient to his will. They have no code of laws to enforce, other than the rules and orders of the agent. The crimes over which the laws have been extended seldom result in trials, because concealed by witnesses. A trial means going a distance, sometimes hundreds of miles, to the nearest court outside of the reservation. It means that all who have knowledge of the crime shall be taken from their homes and imprisoned and held for months as witnesses. It means annoyance, loss,

expense, and frequently the ill will of the autocrat who rules the agency; involving so much hardship and loss that few willingly testify in relation to crimes that have come under their observation. For a certain class of whites, an Indian reservation is a veritable house of refuge. Here are no laws, no writs, no sheriffs, no jails. Here is the secure home of the forger, the horse-thief, and the murderer; here

He shall take who has the power,
And he shall keep who can.

Here the example and influence of corrupt and immoral officers and employees counteract and nullify the training of the teachers and the missionaries. The Indians are keen observers of character, and example is stronger than precept.

If the Indian agent takes a dislike to any school employe or missionary, he can easily bring charges against him, and by intimidation, bribery, and perjury secure almost any amount and kind of evidence he desires. I have known cases during the past year where this has been done by an agent, whose past will not bear thorough investigation, against some of the best employes in the service, whose reputation and character had been established by a lifetime of unselfish and splendid devotion to the Indian cause, and who were respected and admired by all good people who knew them as beyond reproach in every respect. But their presence interfered with plans of the agent and his minions; so, to secure their removal, he brought charges against them which, if true, would forever blast their reputation and ruin their characters. The best people on the reservation rallied to the support of the accused. Counter charges were made showing the unreliable character of the accusers and the absolute falsity of their charges. Two inspectors were sent from Washington to investigate. The first condemned the accused in a report so full of contradictions and evident falsehoods that a second inspector was sent out to make another investigation. The second report, while it whitewashed the agent, had to admit that the parties he accused were innocent. Is it any wonder that twenty-five years of education have not solved the Indian problem, when the educated young men and women must choose to be either farmers, herdsmen, or agency employes, and have to live under the blighting and deadening restraints and influences of the reservation, the corrupting examples of immoral employes, and the despotism of the agent, where the corner stone of free civilized society—government by law—has been omitted? We have had Indian commissioners for the last dozen years who were noble, true, unselfish Christian men, who labored unceasingly and intelligently for the good of the Indian. The school employes of their selection have been of the best; the American people, through congress, have been exceedingly generous. Yet the Indian problem seems still far from solution. Why? Because there is an irrepressible conflict between a free civilized government based on law, and the reservation system. They cannot live together.

One or the other must die. Which shall be?

One of the best commissioners who ever held office, General Thomas J. Morgan, said to me at the close of his service: "I have borne many indignities; my wishes have been set aside and my decisions overruled. I have apparently stultified myself, and I have borne these things in silence because I thought my staying in the office might be of some advantage to the Indian. President Harrison is my personal friend, and desires me to remain during his term of office. But it is impossible for me to remain and retain my self-respect and the respect of others who would attribute to me acts and policies for which I am not responsible and to which I am wholly opposed." And he resigned the work for which he was so well fitted, and in which he could have accomplished so much if his hands had not been tied. There will be little improvement until we abolish the reservations. I have reason to believe that some of them would have been given up during the last year, if the exigencies of local partisan politics had not forced their continuance. Party politicians would not permit the removal of their workers who had received places on reservations. What shall we do? Turn on the light: proclaim the facts about the reservation system. The American people, who have always responded to the pleas for the suffering and the wronged, are both just and generous. When they know the facts, they will demand the abolition of the reservation and that the government cease to keep the Indians in barbarism and hold them as prisoners, paupers and wards, and instead that we should give the red man the full privileges of free American citizens; that we should extend over them the protection and the penalties of law, and give them all the officers and machinery for its enforcement, and that Christian missionaries should have unrestricted access to them; then give them the same schools as the whites and distribute their great wealth in land and money among them, safeguarding it as well as we can. The Indian problem, if we do this, will come to an end within ten years; and we shall have added to our American citizenship an element of which we will be proud: a people who have many fine qualities, and who have already contributed to our history great soldiers, statesmen and orators. The first step toward this desirable end is to put all the Indian business of the government under the absolute control of the commissioner of Indian affairs, with the right to appoint and remove, under civil service rules, all his subordinates, and to abolish reservations, when demanded by the welfare of the Indians.

When the reservation disappears, and the Indians are under protection and penalties of law, then the church, the school, and the various occupations of civilized life will have unhindered opportunity to do their beneficent work, and the Indian will become one of the best elements in our great American civilization.

Our Ancestors Lived in the Sea

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IN THE fables and legends of the peoples there sounds and re-sounds a steadily recurring strain—the "motive" of the water from which all sorts of good things came to man.

In the blue past, when all things still swam in mist, wise fish-folk arose out of the deep in the orient and taught brave truths, which still remain partly obeyed by evil humanity. Kind heroes came to the cultured nations of Central America over the sea. Kind heroes sailed over the ocean to the nations in North America, dragged them from the morass of barbarism, and behaved themselves much more respectably than was the case later with the real visitors from the east, the Spaniards. Shipwrecked men found wise nymphs on lonely islands, who gave them ambrosia to eat and solved for them the riddles of the future.

For us also there arises many a truth out of the waters. Especially so the more we advance on the things of the world as naturalists.

The wave, which fawns at our feet on the strand, and throws shells, snails and sea stars in our path, ever and again, now here, now there, drags in a good building-stone that helps to build further on the proud structure of unfettered world and nature study. To the toil that gnaws rocks in order to deposit fine mud there, later to harden itself again to rock, we owe almost our entire knowledge of the long-gone life of the world, because animal and plant remains have been preserved in this mud that turned to stone.

And, conversely, we would hardly understand these remnants of a past that lies probably millions of years behind us if the animals and plant world in fresh and salt waters today did not give us the richest of material for direct recognition of past forms.

In the water there was, perhaps, the cradle of life. There surely it first reached development and attained certain first and

great goals of evolution, and in it today there grow and flourish a mass of the strangest, most instructive animal forms—among them many survivors of the older forms that we seek in past epochs, and in whom we seek the ancestors of the animals of today.

With truth has it been said that the whole science of zoology and biology of the last sixty years is in the "sign of the water." Within a short time zoological stations have appeared on ocean bights and fresh water seas, true "observatories of the water," as somebody calls them in jest; only they hunt not for fixed stars and comets, but for sea-stars and other representatives of the animal circle of the prickly-skinned, that are without a representative on the land; or they hunt for those splendid stars of the midnight sea, the medusae and sea mantles, that produce the magnificent enchantment of the glowing of the deep.

Man had forced himself with cunning apparatus into the chasms of the ocean holes, where, in ever stormless water, the sea lilies (most dainty animals and not lilies at all) wave their tender stems; where gigantic mollusks creep; where crabs, some entirely blind, some with eyes colossal, teem in darkness that is illuminated only when a lamp-fish darts along wrapped in phantasmal emerald glows.

But now that this is all under way, the appetite grows naturally with the eating. How many seas lie still unexplored? How many networks of streams in the lowlands of far regions may hide the most wonderful material for botanical zoological, Darwinistic study?

That expedition of Challenger has already led us to the southern hemisphere of the earth.

And there lies the "promised land" of all longing seekers after nature's secrets—Australia.

Since July 14, 1770, when Cook and his men scared up a troop of giant kangaroos on the east coast of the Australian mainland, then discovered for the first

time, Australia has maintained its reputation as a zoological wonderland.

There was the black swan, which still is the symbol of a world topsy-turvy to the layman, although not particularly remarkable to the naturalist. And thence came the story of the duck bill, whose dried pelt appeared such a mad thing—a mammal with the shape of, say, the beaver, and with a regular duck's bill in its head—that they who received it suspected that it was an elaborate practical joke.

At last, when the world had accepted the fact that the animal was "genuine," there came the report that it lays eggs, contrary to the honorable practice of mammals.

Circumstantial evidence was produced to the effect that this egg laying story at least was not true, and scientists breathed freely again, believing that they had saved something at any rate out of the world of paradoxes.

For a little while they warned each other against too ready a credence in this curious field. The aborigines reported terrible monsters in the impenetrable interior of the little continent, for example, a colossal black lizard. The aborigines evidently were humbugging.

But then, in 1829, Richard Owen, the excellent English authority on the remains of extinct animals, by chance bought a large bone that came from Australian territory, the island of New Zealand. The anatomist recognized it as the bone of a gigantic bird having relationship with the ostriches. It was determined then that such gigantic birds had indeed lived in New Zealand not so long before, although they are extinct today. And these finds opened the way to an entire series of similar ones on the Australian mainland. Then were found the skeletons of veritable monsters, all of which lived there, marsupial animals to whose family the kangaroo belongs, but fully as large as lions and even rhinoceroses.

After men had become accustomed to this

new knowledge, the duck-bill appeared again in the foreground. There remained nothing, after all, but to acknowledge that it really did lay eggs, and therefore we, in that respect as in the others, find a most wonderful Darwinistic link between the mammals and the reptiles.

In the meantime the list of "incredible" yet "real" Australian animals had been increased with the lizard Hatteria, of New Zealand, not a black giant, it is true, but combining so remarkably the typical form of lizard of today with the forms of long extinct saurians that at last we had to create for its benefit an entirely new order of the reptiles, quite distinct from lizards, snakes, crocodiles and turtles.

Everywhere else, the deeper we peered, we saw more wonders, be we skeptic as we might. Cuckoos ran along the ground like pheasants and an owl cried "cuckoo." Chicken-like birds laid their eggs in enormous bill mounds of wet leaves and left them there to be quickened by the heat engendered by fermentation as in an artificial oven. In mating time the bower bird built himself true marriage bowers of branches and decorated them with gaudy blossoms, shells, bones and all kinds of dainty knick-knacks in a manner really aesthetic.

On the related island of New Zealand, where the mammals seemed to be missing altogether and the birds to be developed the more grotesquely, one parrot lived entirely in the manner of the owl, a second attacked cattle on the pasture with savage hooked beak like a bird of prey, and in the fern-forests they moved in the gloom a family of tiny ostrich birds—the kiwis, most of them not much larger than snipe, and so doubly striking in comparison with the same island's mighty moa ostriches, now extinct, which were larger than our largest African ostrich. So Australia was and remained the land of zoological wonders.

To the thinking observer there appears in at least a great proportion of these marvels

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